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ABSTRACT

This lesson is an exploration of figurative language using the novel "The Phantom Tollbooth" and various Web resources. Students examine figurative language in the story and create a chart representing the literal and figurative meanings of words and phrases. During the four to eight 40-minute class sessions, middle school students will: read the text "The Phantom Tollbooth"; use the Internet to gather information and determine the literal meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases; determine the figurative meaning of words and phrases using context clues from the story; identify figurative language in the novel; and learn proper MLA format for citing sources. The instructional plan, lists of resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. A figurative language resource page, rubric, chart, and answer key; and a PowerPoint presentation "Welcome to the Doldrums" are attached. (RS)

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Finding Figurative Language in *The Phantom Tollbooth*

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Grade Band

6-8

Estimated Lesson Time

Four to eight 40-minute class sessions

ED 480 221

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Overview

To understand text, students need to know how to decode words and make inferences. Students in grades 6-8 are usually adept at decoding words, but many still have difficulty using context clues and making inferences to comprehend meaning. Figurative language is often difficult for this age group because many still grasp only the literal meanings of words. This lesson provides hands-on differentiated instruction by guiding students to search for the literal definitions of figurative language using the Internet. It also guides students in understanding figurative meanings through the use of context clues and making inferences.

From Theory to Practice

Leu, D.J., Jr. (2000). Our children's future: Changing the focus of literacy and literacy instruction. *The Reading Teacher, 53,* 424-430.

- The Internet provides access to a large amount of information that students can use to complete activities and assignments, and therefore, communicate to an intended audience more effectively and clearly.
- Students "need to be prepared for much more than book literacies."
- Using technology prepares students for the future in a global economy. Students gain a basic understanding of how the Internet provides valuable information, not just for this lesson but also for future lessons in school and in life in general.

Student Objectives

Students will

- Read the text *The Phantom Tollbooth*
- Use the Internet to gather information and determine the literal meaning of unfamiliar words and phrases
- Determine the figurative meaning of words and phrases using context clues from the story
- Identify figurative language in the novel *The Phantom Tollbooth*
- Learn the proper MLA format for citing sources

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Resources

- Figurative Language Resource page
- Rubric
- Access to computers and the Internet
- Access to word processing software
- Electronic version of the Figurative Language Chart for each student (and answer key)
- One copy of *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster (Random House, 1993) for each student
- PowerPoint presentation: Welcome to the Doldrums
- Web resources:
  Words@Random
  Encyclopedia.com
  Dictionary.com
  Factmonster, particularly the dictionary and encyclopedia sections
  Noodletools for citing references
  Kid's Tools for Searching the Internet

Instructional Plan

Preparation

Students will read Chapters 1 and 2 of *The Phantom Tollbooth* before beginning this activity. In Chapter 2, the main character visits an imaginary land where he gets stuck "in the doldrums." This phrase will be the focus of the motivational part of this lesson.

Instruction and Activities

1. After reading Chapters 1 and 2, students access the Figurative Language Chart included with this lesson. This chart can be provided to students as an e-mail attachment or posted to the school-based server. Remind students to save the chart to their hard drive (in a personal folder) or a disk before beginning this activity.

2. Tell students to open the chart in a word processing program and look at the first example, "in the doldrums."

3. Students view a PowerPoint presentation: Welcome to the Doldrums. The PowerPoint presentation explains how sailors do not like to sail into the doldrums because there is not enough wind. The information for the presentation was gathered from various websites. If students still do not understand the phrase, they may search for more information about the doldrums on the Internet using Factmonster, Dictionary.com, and Words@Random. Both the literal and figurative meanings of "in the doldrums" are already included on the figurative language chart as an example for students. They can use this example as a guide for their own additions to the chart.

4. Provide students with the definition of figurative language: Figurative language is a tool than an author uses to help readers visualize what is happening in the story. Give each student one copy of the Figurative Language Resource page. Explain that may different types of figurative language can be found in the novel, *The Phantom Tollbooth*. Allow students to use this resource page while completing the figurative language chart.

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5. While reading *The Phantom Tollbooth,* students complete the figurative language chart by finding the word or phrase from column 1, searching the Internet for the literal meaning (see WEB RESOURCES for appropriate websites), and using context clues from the story to determine the figurative meaning. Assign students one chapter of the novel to read each night for homework. While reading, students should note the page in the book where they found the word or phrase. Internet research can be scheduled during class time to allow students to find the literal meanings of the words they found during their reading. The figurative meanings can be completed in class or at home.

6. After completing the examples provided on the chart, students identify 5 to 10 additional examples of figurative language used in the book and add them to their chart. Again, they should use the Web resources provided to determine the literal meaning of the word or phrase and context clues in the story to determine the figurative meaning.

7. Students create a separate Works Cited page to be included with the completed figurative language chart. They can access the Noodletools website to learn how sources are properly cited in MLA format. The Works Cited page will be evaluated based on the resources used, whether appropriate or not, and if resources are correctly cited.

8. After completing the chart and Works Cited page, each student compares his or her chart with another student and adds any additional examples of figurative language to the chart. After the charts have been revised, students save them to their folders on the hard drive or to a floppy disk. They can print a hard copy, e-mail an electronic copy, or provide the teacher with the floppy disk for evaluation.

9. A final whole class discussion focuses on the examples of figurative language found in the story. Each student should share at least one example from his or her chart with the rest of the class. During this discussion, you can informally assess students' understanding of figurative language.

10. Ask students how understanding the figurative meanings of words and phrases made reading the story a more pleasurable and interesting experience for them. Record student responses on the board or on an overhead projector.

Extensions

- This lesson may be used with other children's novels. The novels should include examples of figurative language that can be readily identified. The chart may be changed to include a column for simile and metaphor or other types of figurative language.

- Students send Norton Juster an e-mail or letter describing how figurative language made T more interesting and enjoyable for them. In the letter, they should provide a few of their favorite examples of figurative language from the story.

Student Assessment/Reflections

- Evaluate students with a rubric. The rubric is based on whether students correctly identified the literal and figurative meanings of words and phrases, how many additional examples they were able to find and record, and the resources that they used.

- Figurative language chart answer key

IRA/NCTE Standards

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3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

6 - Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

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Figurative Language Resource page

A tool that an author uses to help readers visualize what is happening in the story.

Some Types of Figurative Language

Hyperbole: An exaggeration (That building can touch the clouds.)

Idiom: A speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to itself grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements, as in *kick the bucket* or *under the weather*.

Irony: The opposite of what is meant.

Metaphor: A comparison of two things, which are alike in some way, in order to clarify our understanding of one of them.

Personification: Making an inanimate object act like a person or animal

Puns: A word or words, which are formed or sounded alike, but have different meaning; to have more than one possible meaning. (Using that pencil is pointless.)

Simile: A comparison using "like" or "as" (She sings like an angel.)

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Figurative Language Rubric

Possible Points	1	2	3	Score
Completion of figurative language chart	Completed 1 to 5 examples of figurative language from the story.	Completed 6 to 9 examples of figurative language from the story.	Completed all 10 examples of figurative language and identified an additional 5 examples from the story.	
Figurative meanings	Provided the correct figurative meanings for 1 to 5 examples of figurative language from the story.	Provided the correct figurative meanings for 6 to 9 examples of figurative language from the story.	Provided the correct figurative meanings for 10 or more examples of figurative language from the story.	
Literal meanings	Provided the correct literal meanings for 1 to 5 examples of figurative language from the story.	Provided the correct literal meanings for 6 to 9 examples of figurative language from the story.	Provided the correct figurative meanings for 10 or more examples of figurative language from the story.	
Works cited	Provided information about Internet sources, but did not cite them using MLA guidelines **OR** Did not provide any information about Internet sources that were used to complete the chart	Provided information about Internet sources, cited them using the MLA guidelines, but did not format them correctly (e.g., not alphabetized according to author's last name)	Provided information about Internet sources and correctly cited them using the MLA guidelines	
			Total Score:	

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Figurative Language Chart

Student Name:_____

WORD OR PHRASE	PAGE IN BOOK	LITERAL MEANING	FIGURATIVE MEANING (Meaning in the story)
Example: In the doldrums	22	An area near the equator where either strong winds or no winds come and go without warning.	The place where you go to when you aren't thinking. You are not moving or doing anything here.
Expectations			
Watchdog			
(As easy as) Falling off a log			
Spelling Bee			
Rhyme and Reason			
Make mountains out of molehills			
Leaves no stone unturned			
A light meal			
Jump to Conclusions			

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Figurative Language Chart
ANSWER KEY

Student Name: _____

WORD OR PHRASE	PAGE IN BOOK	LITERAL MEANING	FIGURATIVE MEANING (Meaning in the story)
Example: In the doldrums	22	An area near the equator where either strong winds or no winds come and go without warning	The place where you go to when you aren't thinking. You are not moving or doing anything here.
Expectations	19	Things or occurrences looked forward to	The place you must always go to before you get to where you are going
Watchdog	33	A dog that guards or watches over property	A dog who has a clock in his side who has been given the job of making sure no one ever wastes time
(As easy as) Falling off a log	42	Tumbling or slipping off of a large tree branch lying on the ground	A task that is simple and easy to do
Spelling Bee	50	A contest where people spell words	An insect that spells nearly every word it says
Rhyme and Reason	76	Logic, sense, and a plan	Two princesses who solve all problems in a fair and reasonable way
Make mountains out of molehills	85	Use molehills to create mountains	To make matters more complicated than they need to be
Leaves no stone unturned	85	To turn over every stone on the planet	To make sure that every option has been explored
A light meal	86	A meal that has few calories	A meal made from shafts of light
Jump to Conclusions	168	Make assumptions that aren't necessarily true	To suddenly be in a place called Conclusions

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Welcome to the Doldrums

Sailors sometimes have difficulty when sailing in the doldrums. Winds will be light causing boats to come to a standstill, sometimes for days. Only sudden storms with strong winds allow sailors to move on.

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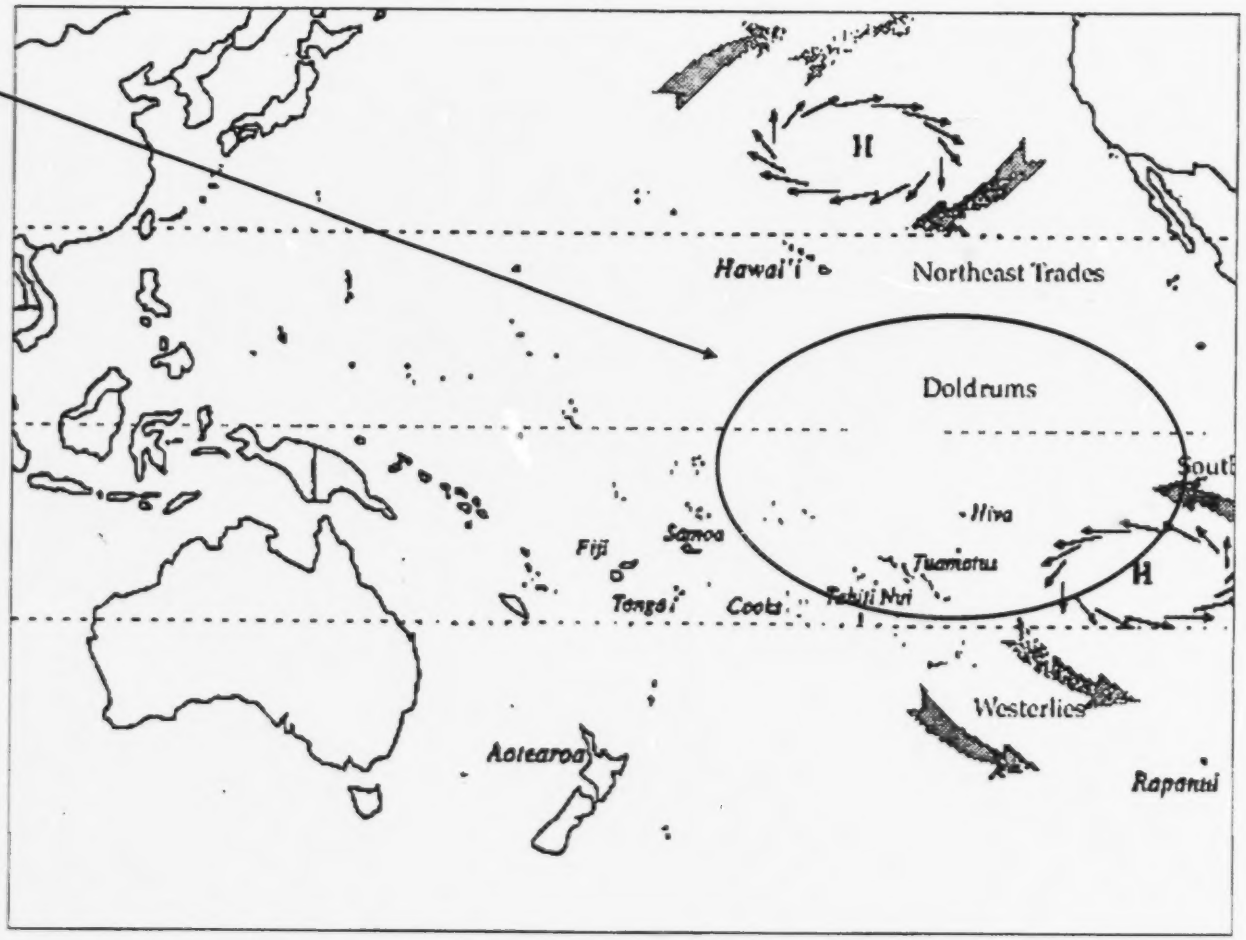
The doldrums are between the northeast trades of the northern hemisphere and the southeast trades in the southern hemisphere. The doldrums vary each year, but never extend far south of the equator.



The doldrums are also known as **Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ)**.

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In the doldrums, the winds are light or do not exist at all, the weather is hot and sticky, and thunderstorms can appear with little warning. Sometimes the warm air that rises causes these sudden storms. Sailors will seek out these sudden storms to get out of the doldrums; they will go from storm to storm until they are finally able to leave the area of the doldrums.

Web Resources

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